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VISION AND OTHER POEMS



BEATRICE POST
CANDLER

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VISION

And Other Poems

BEATRICE POST CANDLER

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DEDICATED

To those who have had the vision,
or the first faint glimpse of man's divinity
and life's essential unity and continuity.

VISION

“.....and they in the synagogue when they heard these things were filled with wrath, and they rose up and thrust Him out of the City; and He passing through the midst of them went His way.”

Luke, 4th Chap.

A thousand years are as a day;
Two thousand years have passed away—
Again the vision comes to me,
A great crowd of humanity,—
The synagogue, the house of prayer,
The Son of Man is preaching there!

The mystery of sacred places,
The beauty of gigantic spaces,
The vast and gorgeous house the Jew
Had builded for the God he knew,
The God of battle and of wrath
Who scattered nations in His path
But to whose furies would suffice
The piteous blood of sacrifice!

The altar that an ancient race
Had consecrated in that place,
The jewels of the altar gleam
As through an Oriental dream,
And like the soft call of a dream
The sweet voice of the Nazarene.

Among the crowd there may have moved
The little children that He loved,
The Scribes, the Elders and with these
The ever-present Pharisees.
The angry priests, the sudden screams,
“God of the Jew, the man blasphemers!”

The bursting storm, the cries of hate
That drove Him from the temple gate!
I seem to see the flying stone,
The passing figure pass alone,
Driven by bigotry and hate,
It passes from the temple gate.

Beyond the temple gate I see
A country road in Galilee;
In peril and in loneliness
It leads unto the world's distress,
And out upon that lonely road
Passes the great Idea of God;—
Upon the road to heal and teach,
Upon the mountain side to preach,
And following that figure dim
A straggling few go after Him;
Those shadowy figures pass again—
A little group of fishermen.

Upon the lake of Galilee
A man has walked upon the sea;

The force that trampled on the wave
Has called the lepers from their cave.
A wondrous thing is now abroad—
The thing we call the Power of God
Is healing on the great high road!

Yonder where the cypress trees
Are sighing in the moaning breeze
There lies the place where sorrowing man
Forever digs the bed for man.
I see the people gathering there
About a new made sepulchre.
Two mourning sisters cry aloud
In lamentation to the crowd
“If *He* had but been at our side
Our brother Lazarus had not died!”

A sudden hush! There seems to spread
An awed excitement 'round the dead,
For on the distant road they say
The Nazarene is on His way.
He hears in silence Lazarus sleeps,
Some say “He prays!” and some “He weeps!”
And yet the mourners at the tomb
Feel that the Force of Life has come,
Like children frightened at the night,
Before it dawns upon their sight
Can *feel* the coming of the light.

The force that trampled on the wave
And called the leper from his cave,
Is moving now toward the grave.
The voice of Love with gentle breath
Is speaking at the door of death,
How strangely simple is the prayer
Immortal Love has uttered there!

Another day has come and gone,
The Syrian night is creeping on.
'Tis but one more accomplished stage
Of a near-ending pilgrimage.
The foxes to their holes have gone
The beasts are sheltered till the morn,
The man today who raised the dead
Has not a place to lay His head!

Those shadowy figures pass again—
The little group of fishermen;
How close they draw around Him here
As though they felt a sudden fear!
They gaze upon the dusk that fills
The dreamy Galilean hills,
How grimly still Jerusalem!
It seems as though she threatened them.
The great walls of the temple loom
A frowning mass amid the gloom.
How clear behind it seems to be
The silhouette of Calvary!

Unto the trembling fishermen
There speaks the Master's voice again—
“Go forth into the world,” He said,
“And heal the sick and raise the dead.
Where ye can but heal in part
Ye first must bind the broken heart,
And at the call of human pain
The Christ-works shall be done again
In the far centuries to come—
And greater things than I have done.
What though the shadows gathering be
In many a dark Gethsemane.
Whose hand is laid upon the plough
He cannot look behind him now.

Take not two coats upon your way,
Lest there should come the dangerous day
When ye begin to broider them
With costly thread and jeweled hem,
And priestly pomp and worldly greed
Should in that broidered vestment breed
The hates of dogma and of creed.
Lest with this vestment on his back
Man place his brother on the rack
Or cast his sister in the flame
Which he has lighted in my name.
Man may behold the frightful cost
The Spirit of his symbols lost!
When by material forms beset
Take heed, take heed lest ye forget

I lived and laboured long to prove
The Spirit-God of Life and Love.”
Then pausing in its ministry
The sweet voice lifted suddenly—
“Whose is the hand that touches me?
I feel the clutch of agony!”

“Nay Master, there is no one here
Save us, the friends thou holdest dear,
No leper comes with mind distraught
To drain the treasures of thy thought,
The evening air is full of prayer
And heavenly peace is everywhere,
Save in the distance we can see
An outcast woman follows thee.
Once when thou didst sit at meat
She weeping came and washed thy feet,
But she will not approach thee twice,
Nor would she dare to raise her voice.”

“Who is there who dares to say
Another is unfit to pray!
Who in his virtue stands alone
So high that he can cast the stone?
Remember from the temple gate
I am an excommunicate,
Beneath the Galilean sky
An outcast and a wanderer I!
A strangled force should be set free,

A splendid soul in Hell may be—
Go bring that child of God to me.”

Oh, wondrous mind that could enroll
The great love-forces of the soul,
That looking through the woman’s eyes
Behind them something recognized,
The thing so pitifully rare
That it was seeking everywhere;
That freed and blest that force sublime
And turned it to the Love Divine.

Later at the cross there stood
The strong, unwavering womanhood;
Fearless it watched beside the dead
When the disciples all had fled.
In love to meet and to abide,—
Virgin and harlot side by side,
And in the morn the Magdalene’s eyes
Were first to see the spirit rise.

Unto the vision ripe to see
The Easter dawn breaks radiantly,
The living truth revealed shall be—
That Heaven is not a distant place
Made for a time or creed or race,
It is a state of being blest
Within the spirit-consciousness,
And Hell is ever at its side,
The mortal thought objectified.

But God is not a potentate
Of human jealousies and hate
Upon an altar throned in state,
Where in our superstition we
Have taught the child to bend the knee
Before a Father full of wrath
Who forms the pitfalls in their path
And by those snares that He has laid
Curses and tempts the thing He made!

Nay, Love is that great formless Thing
From whom the spirit ego springs,
In whom the whole creation swings,
Held as the pattern in the loom,
Held as the child within the womb,
The same is substance and in kind,
Unsevered from the Parent Mind.

Once more outside the synagogue
The soul is seeking for this God,
And little does it heed today
The world-worn cry of “heresy!”
For human want and human need
Cannot be answered by a creed,
Nor any priest’s theology
The starving soul can satisfy.
Unto the hungry heart of man
There calls that mighty fisherman,

Down each succeeding century
He pleads for man's divinity,
That other lives and works may prove
The wondrous, endless power of love.

Beyond the temple gate I see
A country road in Galilee;
Those shadowy figures pass again—
A little group of fishermen!

COMMUNION

Sometimes it comes so gradually that mortal man
Is scarce aware that something in him stirs,
Stirs and withdraws, as though a hand were drawn
Out of a glove unconsciously.

“Strange, strange,” says mortal man
 “that there be two of me!”

This innerself which stirs and draws apart
And walks with angels and returns again,
Coming and going from the heights unseen,
Until the day when it returns no more.
While I—I go my way to pleasure or to work
And of that inner Self I take but little heed.”

Sometimes it comes so suddenly that speech is checked;
The sword, the plough, the pen are impotent.
Peace, and be still! for in thy consciousness
The soul is turning to its origin,
And Man with God is in communion!

ILLUMINATION

You say death is a barrier, and we cannot see
 Into eternity.

It does not seem to me so very wide—
 The Great Divide!

I do not say there is no change, but I aver
 There is no barrier.

What is eternity? The life of earth
 Is just rebirth,

And memory of pre-existence springs
 With flashing wings

Into the psychic thought illumed to see
 Life's continuity,—

And seeing this it does not so much mourn
 Life's passing on;

Nor need it ask of science or theology
 To prove eternity!

EXPIATION

To see that in knowledge alone is relief,
And to desire it more than belief,
To push at the door till it yields bit by bit
 And to feel the supreme joy of it,—

A joy as if something had answered the call
Which gives and must give till it yields us its all.
So we strive, but we try not to cause others pain,
 Lest the door close in darkness again.

With knowledge comes insight and progress and
 peace,
But through expiation alone comes release,
As children of God we are children of Law;
 Let us cease to beseech and implore!

From ages, long ages may be, our account
Still waits till we render the final amount.
If we owe debts to Life, unto Life one by one
 Let us pay till the whole task is done.

TRANSFORMATION;

THE CITY

Saw ye the roof-tops white with snow?
Methought the walls of Chenonceau
Had reared those fair lucarnes on high
In pointed peaks toward the sky.
I dreamed some splendid architect
For me had traced that silhouette!
The little bridge among the trees—
Perhaps some clever Japanese
Has made the fairy thing of air
And placed it 'neath my window where
The lake within the park at night
Reflects a hundred sparks of light.
I see a steeple high and fair
Ascending like a thought in prayer,
While over all the city rests
The moon's transfiguring loveliness.

THE PASSER-BY

Beneath my casement dormer lies
The city with its arteries
Of throbbing life—the endless streets,
As though a heart forever beats
To send the living current forth
Into the east and west and north
And south the human river flows,
Though whence it comes and where it goes
I cannot tell; I only see
And hear it passing endlessly.
I do not know if by my door
The passing stranger passed before,
Upon his path of destiny—
He knows not to what end it be,—
He knows not where, he knows not why,
Goes the eternal passer-by.

Feel ye the City's strain and strife?
I feel the pulse and throb of life.
Nor does the murmur of the sea
Bespeak a greater mystery!

ORIENT AND OCCIDENT

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”
Proverbs.

Through tears the visions of the West are seen.
The dreaming East has kept its soul serene,
But where the struggle of the West has been,
 We see through tears,

Through tears, aye and through blood! Who feels
The breath of Europe’s battle fields
Where the love-spirit to the carnage yields—
 He sees through tears.

But what is deathless in the soul shall rise,
And in the race something undying lies
Which for a greater vision clears our eyes—
 Alas through tears!

THE PSYCHIC

It is dusk and June, my little room
Is haunted by a strange perfume,
Perfume of lilies in the heat,
Subtle scent that is strangely sweet,
As she whose image seems to cling
Lily-like to the heart of spring.

All the beauty that God has thought,
All the wonder that nature wrought,
All the wisdom of ages lies
In a woman's wonderful eyes.
I can see them still, they gaze at me
Out of the mists of memory.

The little fingers that cling to mine
Like the sensitive tendrils of a vine,
I can feel them now and hear the drone
Of the monotonous monotone
Like the voice of a child who isn't strong
Or one who has worked, and worked too long.

“Professors with their pompous airs
And women with their love affairs
Say I'm ‘a great phenomena,’
Greater than all the Psychics are.
No one thinks I'm a woman too,
No one cares or spares but you.

Thanks for the clasp of loving hands
And for the thought that understands!
And those who shield me from arrest
Because they need me for a ‘test’,
They hide their schemes and tell me lies
With the auric colors before my eyes!
They always forget that I can see
The ugly color of treachery,
And I’m tired of stupidity—
I’m tired, tired, tired!” said she.

It was dusk and June, and I sat one day
Watching the daylight fade away,
I was thinking of her with tenderness
And pity that I could not express
For the body that was nearly spent
And the mind’s strange, great development,
The mighty soul with its power to bless
And the frail child-woman helplessness.

The book I held had been forgot:
The room was filled with I know not what—
Strong vibrations in the air
As though her thought was stirring there.
The open windows brought the sound
Of garden life in plant and ground,
The rustling leaves of swaying trees,
The gentle droning of the bees,

Unconscious and subconscious life
Laboring for self-conscious life.
When suddenly it seemed to be
That *nature was aware of me*,
So closely that my little soul
Was in communion with the Whole,
And that great Whole and I were bent
On some intense experiment.
I felt one Life in everything
To me and through me quivering:—
In me it merged and watched and waited,
To me and through me concentrated,
One mind, one force, one effort bent
Upon this one experiment.

Something stirred! Was it a bird
Or my own heart-beat that I heard?
Just a wandering butterfly
Touched my arm and fluttered by,
Then returned and motionless.
Poised itself upon my dress.

“Oh uninvited guest,” said I,
“Beautiful, golden butterfly,
Emblem of the soul’s rebirth
Hovering ’twixt heaven and earth,
Eternal Psyche, radiant thing
Upon the twilight shimmering,

Spirit of eternity—
Why do you come to visit me?"
All at once the empty room
Filled with the scent of sweet perfume,
And in the twilight silently
She stood there and smiled at me!

"My dear, my dear," I cried, "is dead!"
"There isn't any death," she said.
She softly laughed as she used to do
And then I found I was laughing too—
Though at the time I couldn't tell
That tears were in my eyes as well.
So we gazed at each other and laughed as gay
As though we were two little girls at play,
'Till she somehow—suddenly—slipped away—!

The butterfly quivered a little, then
Settled down on my arm again,
Lingering as though it wished to be
All the comfort it could to me.
The clock ticked on against the wall,
From the meadow a distant call
Faintly came to my ears though I
Sat motionless as the butterfly.

All at once through the deepening hush
Came the rippling notes of a garden thrush,
Solemn and sweet, a little hymn,
For the passing soul a requiem!
I knew the bird was singing for her,
But that was all that I saw of her.

Perfume of lilies in the heat;
Perfume of lilies strangely sweet—
As she whose memory seems to cling
Flower-like to the heart of spring.

LITTLE FEET

I love to see them dancing go
Upon the road they do not know;
I wish that I could keep them so—
 Dear little feet!

If I had but the power to bless
And save them from all weariness,
That only flowers might caress
 Their pathway sweet.

I would that I might take again
The stony climbs, the bruises' pain,
And leave for them the sunny plain—
 Dear little feet!

THE CALL OF THE WILL O' THE WISP

Little boy with the yellow curls
Let's go out and play!
Let us follow the Will O' the Wisp
Over the hills away.
Over the fields and over the streams
And into the wonderful Land of Dreams.

Why do they put you into bed
When we want to travel abroad instead?
It's very dull to go in a train,
We haven't got an aeroplane;
And when we start in a boat alone
There is always someone to take us home!

How do they think we can say our prayers
When the Will O' the Wisp is on the stairs?
How do they think we can close our eyes
When out of the window the fire-flies
Are chasing about among the trees
With a little elf whom nobody sees!

But when the nursery is dark and still
He climbs right up to the window sill,
And starts to whisper and then to call
Till we can't go to sleep at all!
Over and over we hear him say
"Won't you come with me and play?"

Close the window and shut the blind
And leave your overshoes behind
With all the naughty things you've done,
(We are going to forget them everyone!)
For every child is glad and gay
Who goes with the Will O' the Wisp to play.

We'll pick the fruit from off the trees
And suck the honey for the bees,
We'll chase the bats and tease the frogs
And get our feet wet in the bogs,
For no one catches cold the day
He goes with the Will O' the Wisp to play.

We'll harness up the butterflies
And ride with them across the skies,
Like clouds upon the wind we'll go
And see the great wide world below;—
Hidden treasures that no one knows,
Empty cities where no one goes,
Huge old ruins where monkeys swing
And dance in the palace of a king.
Heavenly gardens, heavenly sweet,
Filled with the patter of little feet
Children's voices you never heard
And the answering song of an unknown bird.

Over the hills and over the streams
And on—and on—to the Land of Dreams.
Wonderful things the boy will see
If he goes 'round the world with me!"

Where do you come from, Will O' the Wisp?
And are you a playmate true?
They say that the Land that Never Was
Is the place that you lead us to!
But the child and the poet hand in hand
Are ever seeking the magic land.
So—little boy with the yellow curls
Let's go out and play,
Let us follow the Will O' the Wisp
Over the fields away,
Over the hills and over the streams
And into the beautiful Land of Dreams.
The time may come when we shall say
We thank God that we know the way
To the wonderful Land that Will Always Be
For the Will O' the Wisp and you and me.

THE TEST

Do the sick ask for you, and in your presence feel
The spirit of the Christ to help and heal?
Do the heart-broken fear that you condemn too much,
When they would trust to a more gentle touch?
Do children come to you, and coming say
“I love you!”—Or do they turn away?

SONG

Oh my beloved, what can I bring to you?
Flowers that fade, beauty that vanishes,
Success that fate or fortune gives today—
To-morrow banishes.

Oh my beloved, what can I sing to you?
Life is so short for service or for song,
We touch the harp—its notes of flattery
To youth belong!

Lo I will give to you the poet's soul,
The joy to which all life and hope respond,
Which sings and carries its unfinished song
Into the Great Beyond. . . .



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